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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0325
INFO RHMFISS/BUMED WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RULSAAV/NAVMEDRSCHCEN SILVER SPRING MD PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUENAAA/SECNAV WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHJS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3156
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2602
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 5007
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5490
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3164
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1341
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1368
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JAKARTA 001913

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR P, EAP, L, OES, G/AIAG, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP
NSC FOR E.PHU
SECDEF FOR USAP/ISA/APSA D.WALTON
USPACOM FOR PEDROZO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [TBIO](#) [AMED](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: LOW-KEY APPROACH BEST FOR JAKARTA NAVAL MEDICAL
RESEARCH UNIT

REF: JAKARTA 1199 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires John Heffern, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Mission urges USG patience concerning discussions with the GOI re the future of the Naval Medical Research Unit Two (NAMRU-2) in Jakarta. Recent press reports that NAMRU-2 was to be closed are in error. The GOI has told us that it needs time before resuming negotiations toward a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), but has signaled it wants to allow NAMRU-2 to remain in Jakarta.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY (Con'd): In the meantime, broader issues regarding sample sharing and benefits need to be resolved ahead of a new MOU. Even with restrictions, NAMRU-2 retains significant operational capability and is able to contribute to the monitoring of avian influenza and other viruses in the region. Pressing hard to resume negotiations now would be counterproductive and engaging in a public debate would not be in our interest. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (C) Mission understands that there will be an inter-agency meeting in Washington shortly to discuss the NAMRU-2 negotiations. The attached points provide Mission's assessment of the situation. We urge continued USG patience on this matter.

FALSE PRESS REPORT

¶4. (U) After a couple of months of relative quiet on the issue, an inaccurate press report recently sparked queries related to NAMRU-2. Reuters reported on September 25 that Indonesia had halted the activities of NAMRU-2. The story received no corroboration, however, from other sources. It also cited Indonesian Director General for American and European Affairs, Retno Marsudi, as confirming that NAMRU-2's operations had not been terminated. Presidential Adviser

Dino Djalal told Dep/Pol/C on October 2 that Indonesia needed NAMRU-2. With the exception of this one false report, NAMRU-2 is out of the news and open for business.

OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY

15. (SBU) As a result of Minister of Health Supari's campaign to gain more Indonesian control over the sharing of biological samples originating from Indonesia (reftel), NAMRU-2 is operating under several restrictions that she has imposed:

-- Sample Sharing and Data Collection: Since April 2008, NAMRU-2 has not been able to collect or share samples with other institutions both inside and outside of Indonesia. Since May 2008, NAMRU-2 has not been permitted to conduct field studies. However, collaborating partners continue to collect and analyze data and review them with NAMRU-2. NAMRU-2 also continues to work on samples that were already in its possession in April. NAMRU-2 is thus able to maintain operations at 40-60 percent of normal.

-- Responding to Requests: In recent months, Indonesian authorities have not allowed NAMRU-2 to assist Indonesian research institutions, as it previously had done. This has not significantly impaired NAMRU-2's operations.

-- Customs Clearance: Since July, Indonesian health officials no longer have the authority to request Customs' clearance of NAMRU-2 equipment and supplies. Some shipments

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thus remain tied up in Customs. NAMRU-2 has begun purchasing items locally as a reasonable solution.

16. (C) Outside of Indonesia, NAMRU-2 remains highly productive, with research activities under way in Cambodia, Laos and Singapore.

PERSONNEL

17. (SBU) In order to avoid forcing a premature decision on the status of NAMRU-2 personnel, NAMRU-2 is no longer replacing departing U.S. staff. NAMRU-2 currently has eleven officers and six enlisted members. By next summer, without replacement, attrition will reduce that number to approximately ten members total. However, that is well above the absolute minimum needed to sustain operations, particularly for a period that is not expected to exceed one year. Half of NAMRU-2's Indonesian staff are contract employees. If funding reductions require staff cuts, the contract employees will be released first, thereby preserving core local staff.

IMPORTANCE OF INDONESIA

18. (C) Indonesia is an important country from a global health perspective, and NAMRU-2 is one of the few USG health assets permanently located in Indonesia. It is important to maintain this presence. Indonesia is a vast country with a large variety of disease environments unique in Southeast Asia. Other countries in Southeast Asia have greatly reduced or eliminated transmission of diseases of interest and are, therefore, of significantly less interest to DOD medical research scientists. In contrast, Indonesia continues to experience a heavy incidence of those infectious diseases of greatest interest to the USG. There is no suitable substitute.

NEGOTIATIONS

19. (C) Regarding the situation in Indonesia, Mission and NAMRU-2 leadership believe that it is best not to press the Indonesians to resume negotiations on the MOU until the GOI is ready. Negotiations were suspended as too controversial after legislative hearings on the subject in June.

Indonesian Ambassador Sudjudnan in Washington reportedly told Senate senior staffer Keith Luse the GOI would resume negotiations after the 2009 legislative and presidential elections (July or September 2009). Some key contacts in the President's office and DEPLU have signaled to Mission they do not intend to close NAMRU-2. Their plan to resume negotiations after the elections essentially buys NAMRU-2 a year of time. Pushing for the resumption of negotiations would risk precipitating a negative outcome.

¶10. (C) Sample sharing is part of a larger discussion that is ongoing and turning in a more favorable direction. Mission does not want to insert NAMRU-2 in the middle of those talks. Rather, it is possible that avian-influenza negotiations with the World Health Organization may resolve key outstanding issues concerning materials transfer agreements (MTA) and benefits. Sample sharing is a crucial USG global health objective and one that should not be jeopardized by adding NAMRU-2 to the mix. Rather, resolution of the sample-sharing MTA issue would provide a tremendous boost for resuming NAMRU-2 negotiations.

CONTINUED PATIENCE NEEDED

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¶11. (C) Mission conducted a public affairs campaign in the spring of 2008 in an attempt to correct the public record. In the highly skewed landscape of suspicion and disinformation, publicity here strongly favors Supari and undercuts the GOI's ability to pursue MOU negotiations quietly. The legislature, which has held hearings and issued a set of mixed recommendations on the issue, is more likely in the heat of a public debate to pander to vocal opponents than to defend a research institution seen as part of the U.S. military. Apart from Supari and her band of detractors, the GOI appears willing to let NAMRU-2 continue and to establish a new legal basis for it once the political conditions are more favorable. Pushing back publicly is not in the USG's interests. We urge continued patience as the GOI tries to work through this situation.

HEFFERN